

## OPINION

by **Prof. Iren Yordanova Peltekova, PhD**

Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”,

Member of the Scientific Jury pursuant to Order No. RD 16-57 of 26.09.2025  
of the Rector of Shumen University “Episkop Konstantin Preslavski”

**Regarding:** Doctoral dissertation submitted for the award of the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the professional field 1.3. *Pedagogy of Teaching ...*, area of higher education 1. *Pedagogical Sciences*

**Title of the dissertation:** “Development of the Motor Abilities of 9th- and 10th-grade Students through Volleyball”

**Author:** **Diana Zhivkova Filipova**, PhD candidate (part-time studies)

Doctoral program: “Methodology of Physical Education and Sport”

**Scientific supervisor:** **Assoc. Prof. Vera Antonova-Varbanova, PhD**, National Sports Academy “Vasil Levski”, Sofia

### **General presentation of the documentation**

The documentation submitted by Diana Zhivkova Filipova for evaluation is comprehensive and fully compliant with all legal, procedural, and institutional requirements applicable to this type of academic work. The dissertation entitled “Development of the Motor Abilities of 9th- and 10th-grade Students through Volleyball” has been verified for plagiarism using the software Plag. The obtained similarity score confirms the absence of plagiarism, thus allowing the procedure for the official defence and the preparation of this opinion.

### **Relevance of the topic**

The maintenance and development of both general and specific motor abilities of the human body are among the most important objectives of all physical activities. The level of development of the basic physical qualities – speed, strength, endurance, agility, and flexibility – is essential for achieving success in physical education and sport. Volleyball skills acquired at school represent a valuable asset for every student. The game of volleyball offers unique opportunities for conducting integrated physical education lessons that few other sports can provide. One of the most positive aspects of school volleyball is that the development of physical qualities occurs naturally and almost imperceptibly for students.

During lessons, pupils remain physically active without becoming overfatigued, which is of great importance for their performance in subsequent academic activities throughout the day. The game is fun, easy to understand, and can be played with a varying number of participants on different surfaces. At the same time, volleyball training requires long-term technical, tactical and physical preparation.

The author of the dissertation, Diana Filipova, has focused her research interest precisely on the holistic motor development of secondary school students through the means of volleyball. The answer to the question of whether the dissertation topic is relevant is unequivocally positive.

### **Evaluation of the structure and content of the dissertation, the abstract and the publications**

The design of the dissertation meets the established academic standards for such a scientific work, comprising both theoretical and practical components. It includes a title page, table of contents, list of abbreviations, introduction, three chapters, conclusions and recommendations, contributions, references and appendices.

The manuscript comprises 184 pages, illustrated with 23 figures, 29 tables and 9 appendices. The final part of the appendices presents the exercises used in the preparation of the students in the experimental group.

A total of 160 students from the first stage of upper secondary education participated in the study, drawn from two schools:

- First Language School, Varna (Experimental Group – EG)
- Secondary School “Vasil Levski”, Dolni Chiflik (Control Group – CG)

For the purposes of the pedagogical experiment, the students were divided by gender: 80 boys (40 EG + 40 CG) and 80 girls (40 EG + 40 CG).

The bibliography comprises 100 sources – 89 in Cyrillic, 8 in Latin script, and 3 online resources. The cited literature is appropriate and up to date. The author has followed the standards for citation both within the text and in the bibliography. The working hypothesis, formulated based on the theoretical review, is coherent with the research focus of the doctoral candidate.

Already in the introduction, Filipova captures the reader’s attention by presenting sport, and volleyball in particular, as a means of enhancing students’ physical qualities and fostering habits of an active lifestyle that contributes to maintaining good health. The introduction successfully directs the reader towards the core research problem.

In the first, theoretical chapter (58 pages), the author conducts a retrospective analysis of the emergence, spread, and development of volleyball worldwide and in Bulgaria, and of the significance of rule changes for the improvement of the game. Special attention is paid to the aims and objectives of physical education at the various educational stages, to national educational standards, and to the content of the new curricula in Physical Education and Sport for Grades IX and X, effective from the 2023/2024 academic year. The author provides a thorough analysis of motor qualities, skilfully illustrating their

specific application within volleyball. At the end of each sub-section in Chapter 1.4, Filipova formulates practical recommendations for the methodology of developing physical qualities, demonstrating in-depth knowledge of the field. She also analyses the technical elements of volleyball, linking them with the level of development of students' physical abilities.

The second chapter precisely describes the research methodology – the subject, object, aim and tasks. The chapter presents data from the testing batteries, which include four anthropometric indicators, ten indicators of physical fitness and eight indicators of volleyball skills. Measurements were taken at both entry and exit stages. The procedures for data collection are accurately described and illustrated in the appendices.

The methodology used for sport-pedagogical testing is reliable and valid. The mathematical and statistical methods applied are appropriate and have been effectively used for the analysis of empirical results, presented in the third chapter.

The interpretation of the results in Chapter Three is well-structured and illustrated with figures and tables. Although statistically oriented, the text remains clear, logical and comprehensible even to readers who are not volleyball specialists.

A particularly valuable element of the study is the survey conducted among 40 physical education teachers regarding their attitudes, experience and practices in using volleyball exercises to develop students' motor abilities. The conclusions drawn from the survey results provide useful insights for identifying the most effective exercises for developing motor qualities in 9th- and 10th-grade students.

The author formulates ten conclusions and six recommendations that are well-grounded and logically derived from the results of the research.

In summary, the scope and structure of the dissertation make it possible to achieve the objectives and tasks of the study. At both terminological and technical levels, the work meets a high academic standard.

The abstract, consisting of 44 pages, corresponds fully to the content of the dissertation and provides a comprehensive overview of the research questions and findings. The three academic publications related to the dissertation are independent contributions that directly reflect the conducted research. Reading the dissertation was a professional pleasure, inspired by a genuine interest in the presented findings and their methodological precision.

### **Scientific contributions**

I fully accept the contributions formulated and substantiated by Diana Filipova. In addition, I would highlight the following key contributions of the dissertation:

- Theoretical and methodological contribution – The study enriches the methodology for developing the physical qualities of students in upper secondary education (first gymnasium stage). The model designed by the author enhances not only the volleyball skills of students but also the professional competencies of physical education teachers.

- Practical contribution – The correlation analysis between physical development, physical qualities, and volleyball technical skills among boys and girls in Grades IX–X provides valuable practical insights. This gives the dissertation a pronounced applied character and contributes to refining the methodology of teaching volleyball in schools.

### Remarks and recommendations

No critical remarks are formulated regarding the dissertation.

A minor omission could be noted in the presentation of content related to the description of volleyball technical skills. Including a dedicated sub-section on this topic would broaden the appeal of the work among readers interested in school volleyball methodology.

My recommendation to the author is to continue her research with other age groups so that her rich practical experience as a player and her deep knowledge of the game may find even broader application in school volleyball.

### Conclusion

The search for new forms and methods of teaching that ensure increasingly better outcomes remains a constant concern for professionals in the field of physical education and sport. The doctoral candidate, Diana Filipova, has conducted a challenging and valuable study focusing on an important target group – students in Grades IX and X. The dissertation is detailed, consistent, and represents a complete academic research work based on empirical data from sport-pedagogical testing. The author has carried out a systematic and in-depth investigation of the research problem, offering up-to-date theoretical and practical results that fully correspond to the stated aims and objectives. The study meets all the formal and substantive requirements for a doctoral dissertation of this type.

I conclude that the doctoral candidate, Diana Filipova, possesses the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct independent scientific research and to competently interpret and apply specialised literature in the fields of physical education and sport, volleyball instruction in schools, and the development of students' motor abilities. Based on the conducted analysis, conclusions, and overall assessment of the dissertation "Development of the Motor Abilities of 9th- and 10th-grade Students through Volleyball", the abstract and related publications, **I recommend that the members of the esteemed scientific jury award Diana Zhivkova Filipova the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" in the professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching ...**



05 November 2025

(Signature).....  
Prof. Dr Iren Peltekova