

Bishop Constantine of Preslav University

Faculty of Humanities

Department of History and Theory of Literature

REVIEW

of a dissertation on the topic:

Literature Education in the Second Gymnasium Stage of Secondary School

author: Tsvetelinka Tosheva Draganova

for the acquisition of an educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the field of higher education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of teaching in... (methodology of teaching in Bulgarian language and literature)

Scientific supervisor : **Prof. Temenuzhka Gancheva Teneva Phd**

Reviewer: **Assoc. Prof. Sonya Raycheva Phd**, Paisiy Hilendarski University, Faculty of Philology, Department of Literary Theory and Bulgarian Literature

Significance and relevance of the scientific issue

The issues raised in the dissertation are of particular importance for the field of literary education. The study applies a current conceptual framework to achieve the set goals: change in the LOD according to the new curriculum for the second stage of high school, grades 11 and 12.

The aspects involved are important, derived as a concept from traditional and innovative theory. The study offers original conclusions and inferences that enrich and develop it.

Formulation of the problem and objectives

The outline of the conceptual framework of the study, with a volume of 252 pages, includes: introduction, 3 chapters, questionnaire survey, conclusion, contributing elements, appendix and bibliography.

The introductory part contains the motivational basis of the dissertation work, outlining 30 years of experience in the process of educational transformation. The teaching work with 3 classes in the Plovdiv Elementary School under the program for the second high school stage, as well as Draganova's assessment experience are a sufficient basis for outlining literature as a multifactorial environment, orienting the design, course and effectiveness of the development in a specific research process - interdisciplinary and intertextual. **The object of the study** - literature education in the second high school stage, as well as **the subject** - the functionality of the new curricula for OOP and their applicability through the dominance of a thematic-problematic approach are components of **the goal** of the study, namely: to study and analyze LOD as a complex field, determined by various factors in their dynamics. **The tasks** of the study in subordination to the goal include: study of contexts and components of LOD, significant in their purposefulness for the purposes of the study.

The development, focused in **the first chapter**, traces the normative chronology of educational change, at the center of which is the competency-based approach. **The design** of the study outlines the framework of a specific context, namely: analysis of contextual fields, a basis for literary interpretation with the leading methodological role of the thematic-problematic approach; study of the positions of experts in order to highlight productive tendencies; sharing one's own pedagogical experience with approved learning situations to compensate for deficits.

The methodological context of the research framework thus outlined logically derives **the hypothesis** of the study, based on the expectation that the applicability of the new program will be linked to new approaches with opportunities for reflection and experience of the educational content despite the deficits and inert models of the contemporary educational reality.

Adequacy of research methods

The scientific toolkit is expressed through precisely selected methods and adequate approaches with different goals according to the research intentions. Right from the beginning of the work, the clear conceptual focus is impressive, illustrated with the scientifically based language of the author. The high criteria

are in line with the latest trends in literary education, correlated with social dynamics and the rich teaching experience of the doctoral student.

The applied **research methods and tools** are relevant to the objectives of the study.

The bibliography is represented by a significant number of studies, monographs, collections, articles, electronic publications; documents, reports, textbooks; online resources. The sources testify to the knowledge of the current state of the methodological field and the literature on the specific research problem. The sources, with their relevance and adequacy, are relevant to the study of the issue under consideration.

Content. General structure. Logic of the presentation

The paragraphs constructed in **the first chapter** concern cultural aspects with a focus on the problems of reading in the digital world (first paragraph). The scientific statements derived from postmodern authors present the general contemporary picture of global information network digitalization with the worrying problems surrounding the “new type of identity”, subject to the easy culture. The analysis of the author Tsv. Draganova problematizes these trends in order to derive its contextual direction. Her ability to lead a kind of scientific dialogue (with Bauman, Foucault, Krumov, etc.) stands out as a contribution here. Because, standing on the side of the “digital children”, she also updates her concerns along with those of the thinkers of the previous century, showing not only deep understanding and empathy, but also offering current alternatives. Moreover: her participation in various scientific formats, media appearances, forums (as well as in personal conversations with me, the author of the review), emphasize her commitment as a conscientious teacher in the social educational field. Regarding the place of the school in its purpose and in particular of literary education “on the crest of the incoming wave” (p. 23), valuable generalizations are shared, one of which is the recalled statement of Aristotle, referring to the specificity of humanitarian knowledge, in particular rhetoric with the prevailing ethos, pathos, logos and their correlation with modern teaching.

The second paragraph of Chapter One discusses philosophical, literary and methodological aspects of LOD by opening up ideas and concepts aimed at forming human individuality. The recalled ethical statements of Levinas, Tsv.

Todorov, etc. are intended to emphasize the empathetic attitude towards otherness among the searches for contemporary pedagogical strategies. **The footnotes**, talentedly referenced by the author of the paper, contribute to an even clearer refinement of the research directions. Learning to listen in order to hear the Other is a contemporary deficit in the context of literary education. How can we improve it? Through empathetic bridges to otherness for "rediscovering the truth about humanity," emphasizes the doctoral student (p. 27). It is precisely interpretative strategies that support this process. Because the search for meaning and significance is not only a cherished dream of the teacher, forming such attitudes and attitudes towards studied works and authors, but above all where conscious, where not – contemporary priorities of life goals for the Z and Alpha generations. Moreover, the dialogue in the educational discourse assumes this to happen. In this "space of openness", as Draganova defines it, the "will to ask" involves the students in a kind of "miracle" (a metaphor from T. Teneva's productions). Something happens in the light of H. R. Jauss's receptive aesthetics and this is the formation and rediscovery of the reader's identity through the work as an "open system" (W. Eco). This is precisely what **intertextuality contributes to**, a principle that the author of the study purposefully develops, problematizing it at the same time. Here, the deep knowledge of productions such as those of Y. Krasteva, N. Georgiev, etc. distinguishes a sustainable concept precisely related to intertextuality in LOD (intertextuality) as "meaning and impact" (p.38). Because the task of the teacher, torn today between "Hosanna!" and "Crucify him!" is precisely this: to develop critical thinking and civic engagement within the framework of literary sharing. This **paragraph** outlines LOD through the "warming up" aspects of philosophy, literary studies and the "connective tissue" of methodology, in order to recall the fundamental achievements in these areas of leading authors such as R. Yoveva. Vl. Atanasov. R. Radev, A. Damyanova, T. Teneva, etc., valuable with their far-sighted visionary guidelines, especially relevant today.

Constructivist approaches are the subject of objective advocacy in the course of the development as a type of "communicative action", mostly through the working alternative to the thematic-problematic and comparative approaches, tested in the course of the research.

The third paragraph brings up a very important problem, namely: the change in the curriculum with prevailing critical reflections. The analytical author's approach covers both the European educational reality and the specifics of a national nature. The deficits are diagnosed through the European language

framework, but in the Bulgarian literary and educational context. They do not remain in the sphere of findings, but alternative methodological ideas are indicated. The derived role of the teacher is a key factor in them, as long as it has the necessary academic support: seminars, trainings, trainings, qualification courses, etc., is emphasized in the development. The construction of a new educational model in a digital environment places the subjects of the teacher and the student as co-authors of the interpretive discourse. The summary cited here is a starting point for undertaking an effective methodology, specifically aimed at the second stage of high school.

The second chapter covers structural-systemic deficits, the subject of analysis in three paragraphs. **The first** of them advances the author's reflections, inspired by the pedagogical experience of Tsv. Draganova, on the literary canon as a construct with a discourse orientation. Its correlation with the contemporary meaning-orientation, aimed at the formation of competencies, is dominated by the construction of "more reading codes". The critical reflections in this part of the work conceptualize the general, but also the detailed problems of a substantive, as well as a receptive nature. On the basis of analytical approaches, the summary is made that "today's literary education is still a hostage to decades of practices" (p. 75). But the search for the "golden ratio" between the conserved and liberalized canonical knowledge is part of the movement "from the list - to the Meaning", it is emphasized in this paragraph (p. 81). Modern student readers, in order to master the codes of competent knowledge in the literary process, need to possess skills for socially shared knowledge – this conclusion, on p. 82, fully corresponds to contemporary methodological searches in literary education.

Through a **second paragraph**, dedicated to the historical as a concept and context in high school literature programs, the research course is determined to focus on the literary and educational field of historical discourse. Why is this necessary? The historical as the "core of Bulgarian modernity" (T. Nikolov) has stable roots, buried in the historical layers of the entire Bulgarian literary century, and it is they that determine our national literary value. The encounters of facts with Meaning are at the heart (and always have been!) of teaching Bulgarian authors and their works – this is proven by the analytical observations and approved lessons of the doctoral student. Textual notes, sample illustrations are a strong evidentiary argument in the research process. Interpretive approaches become a concept for understanding the historical principle, applicable in the contemporary educational reality. The legitimation of the

classics with the tools of synchronous - interpretative optics is deployed in the educational thematic situations. The emphasis on the educational narrative of historical eras **is of** utmost importance and because of the civic competencies that should be formed through literature classes, it is emphasized in this paragraph. Logically, the emphasis is also transferred to the next – **third paragraph**, dedicated to textbooks and educational content (rubrics, tasks, parallels), as “part of the world library of images and ideas from the great history of the spirit” (p.99). Various publishing houses with structured thematic-problematic fields, determined by the cultural-historical context (Bulvest, Prosveta, Anubis, etc.), are targeted. The commentary highlights deficiencies: insufficient potential for multimodal learning; ambitious referral to various digital resources, etc. Thus, “a sustainable cognitive model is not achieved,” claims the author of the study, because “the eclectic abundance of texts and tasks – the fruit of an incomplete team-thought-out strategy” leads to confusion and a lack of motivational interest on the part of students (p.103). The abundance of observational tracking of various content aspects illustrates the current status of the language of educational resources. However, the many references among the sea of diverse “literary” references can be reduced here - this way the study will not lose its applied value.

According to the logic of the study, a wishful recommendation is made: to form not only a literary and historical culture, but also a civic one in modern schools (p. 101).

The third chapter covers the relevance between LOD and the development of competences with a theoretical and applied focus. The opening **first paragraph** presents the institution of genre – a priority recommendation in the monograph by R. Yoveva (2002), but here positioned on the contemporary status of the methodology of literature education. The genre is presented as an “agent” in the process of the discovery adventure for discovering and constructing meaning. The question of **meaning** in increasingly complex social dynamics is at a priority position not only through the logotherapy and existential analysis of V. Frankl (1978) and his followers Il. Dundon and Al. Patakos (2025), but also in the process of modern methodological searches in the field of literature. It is the genre, as emphasized in this paragraph, that has a fundamental character for mastering basic literary codes and conventions (p. 112). The ideas derived in the study focus on “genre as a synthesis of different meaning-oriented bundles”, presenting the research direction in the process of mastering genre characteristics precisely through the problem-thematic

principle. Thus, not only a reading culture is formed, but also opportunities for mastering the communicative genre specificity. It is the genre as a cognitive tool that facilitates the understanding of artistic meaning and forms the discourse competence of the student individual. The shared approved learning situations with cognitive tasks precisely in this direction ("Gradushka", "Bai Ganyu Journalist", etc.) have exactly this goal – to show the effectiveness of the research design.

The second paragraph of the third chapter discusses several components: the transformation of comparative interpretation into reflection; the dialogicity that builds "meaningful bridges" and forms a high artistic taste; the comparative approach that promotes the activity of the student subject. Because he, the high school student, constructs his knowledge precisely through the provocativeness of the combined approaches in the course of interpretation. The author emphasizes that the possible guarantee for building complex literacy occurs precisely when the corpus of thematic fields is used, but specified through the teaching experience of the doctoral student. However, it is necessary to refine the methodological tools for discovering "new approaches to Bulgarian literature" – is summarized in this paragraph (p.133).

The emphasis on the student essay for building competencies is part of the research procedure of the study. The special status of the essay as an educational tool is considered in its specificity as an opportunity for the formation of text-building skills. The interdependent relationships between essay and interpretation are deployed as a subject of analysis, referring to expert summaries in the productions of T. Teneva, R. Radev, Vl. Atanasov. and others. Formation of sociocultural competencies in the high school student is a supporting structure at this stage of the study. A special focus of reasoning in the research design is determined on critical thinking, not only provoked by the effective influence of the essay genre, but formed as a type of literary competence on the basis of civic education. The genre conventions of the essay as a "translator of a certain type of experience" are illustrated through approved situations. A representative sample of a "strong" and "weak" class (total number of 57 students) illustrates ways to develop argumentative reasoning at a content-conceptual level. The results are encouraging: there are skills to read and articulate different semantic valences of studied texts (p. 149). The extensive comments show profound methodological proficiency. It is presented through a set of approaches, steps, forms for promoting reading experience, growing into essay skills: written assignments, oral presentations, etc. Dictated by the

doctoral student's pedagogical experience, they are visionarily combined with trends regarding improving the connection between interpretive and essay abilities. Here, the contribution nature of the work stands out particularly clearly – the proposed methodological alternatives contain effective potential, applicable in the contemporary educational reality. This fact has its theoretical and applied continuation in the further course of the development – the connection of literature, both with the genre conventions of the essay and with civic education.

The third chapter has as its subject of analytical research precisely the relation: literature – civic education. Interesting approaches with a practical focus are proposed. The concept, distinguished as “civic competence” is derived from the triad: knowledge – skills – values. The conclusions cover both the attitudes and values of the high school student and the political nature of literary education. Regarding the latter – I have certain reservations, dictated by speculations about postmodern overexposed trends, which belittle the specifically literary context of teaching (p. 167). Literature in the perspective of civic formation needs to focus on “working mechanisms for changing the educational environment, practices and overall philosophy of secondary education”, the author emphasizes. Her current awareness (of normative documents, results from PISA, PIZLS , etc.) allows her to analyze their correlation with today's working practices in school: passively sustainable, with systemic limitations, etc. deficits. The question that logically stands out here is: how and why is the civic idea lost through literary education, which “recognizes above all the values of the genus, ethnicity, nation”? The answer to this question consists of a kind of synthesis of listed reasons from statements by A. Damyanova, O. Georgieva-Teneva, etc., but is synthesized through the dominance over the subjects of the teacher and the student, products of a certain social environment and carriers of certain mental schemes. The responsible role of the teacher, motivating towards “open reading”, is expressed in a precise methodological selection of learning situations and tasks by integrating civic identity with dialogical readings of fiction. In this way, the “unity of socialization and subjectivization of students” is supported, the author concludes. To illustrate her basis, she offers outlined semantic lines with a view to the current literature curriculum for the second grade of high school. Thus, a problematic emerges that “completes” the missing civic education project in literary education: elective classes, educational initiatives, thematic accents suitable for a “new type of reflection”. For example, on p. 175 a type of

investment in the media literacy and culture of students is proposed, which can become a working good practice for critical reflection. The remaining problematic and thematic situations presented in the context of civic education problematics prove the objectivity of the methodological design of the work. The only exception is the example of "Fight" by Hr. Botev, illustrating the "blurring of the boundary between ethical and civic self-consciousness", as noted on p. 180. The concept of "religiosity", included in the questionnaire survey and cited here, does not encompass the deep substantive motives of faith such as life meaning and dedication. That is why the conclusion formulated as "a discrepancy between religiosity – a tool for pursuing goals, interests and ethical regulation in "Fight"" is found to be inappropriate. This fragment of the development needs deeper content refinement. Since, as is argued at the end of this paragraph, the civically responsible teacher has a choice and professional will to build on the cognitive levels of students. But he, the teacher, must know the past sufficiently deeply and objectively to correlate it with today's reality in the context of literature oriented towards the formation of civic culture. Even if the resources of digital meta-literary texts are used, "if I don't have love – it doesn't benefit me at all" – it is not in vain that this is one of the maturity themes. The derived role of pedagogical rhetoric also helps here – not only to convince, but to provide a degree of influence and enjoyment. If the teacher is sufficiently proficient in rhetorical communication, it can be a fascinating example, especially since here, on page 185, an interesting learning situation is proposed, aiming to present a public statement (sharing) of a comparison between a text and a contemporary context. The development of oral rhetorical competences as a type of "social rehearsal" for civic public appearances is a special type of methodological strategy, approved and presented as a result. The summary, aimed at the deficiency of the student's speech culture, is not only consensual, but with the proposed alternatives, the educational goals in literary education, equally neglected today, are rehabilitated at the same time. The proposed "small steps" in compensating for the deficiency and deficits encompass "conversations about literature, building the individual's overall horizon" (p. 191).

The results of the survey, as a tool of the research procedure, also include **the teacher's voice**.

The composition of the development is finalized with shared results from a survey, which highlights the key role of the teacher: position, ideas, trends. The main goal of the study, in addition to "diagnosing the functionality

of the current model”, is to analyze “deficits, and especially the correlation between the learning process and the state maturity exam (DZI)” – p. 192. The survey toolkit is synchronized with both a digital application and the methodological assistance of an AI language model (Gemini).

38 teachers of English language arts, teaching in grades 11 and 12 from different geographical areas in specialized, vocational and secondary schools, were surveyed .

The qualitative aspects of the survey graphically reflect the results of the respondents' answers, affecting different levels of satisfaction, but also recommendations, such as: developing critical thinking; including more contemporary authors; functional prioritization of the comparative approach; specifics of a didactic nature inherent in literary teaching, etc.

Derived **from the qualitative analysis of the results** distinguish three focuses: deficits, findings, recommendations. The lack of "silent reading", and hence - the lack of aesthetic contemplation, is distinguished as a problem with a dominant emphasis. According to the logic of the study, communication with the literary work in the discursive field of receptive experience turns out to be a significant factor for the overall teaching of literature in the second stage of high school. "Live conversation in the classroom", especially necessary to prevail over the accumulation of facts and burdensome information, is another deficit in the survey study. The qualification of teaching staff is also the subject of analytical commentary. The failure to master "new methodological tools adequate to the changes" affects the overall LOD, emphasizes the doctoral student.

What is interesting is the analytical summary regarding the new program, namely that vocational high schools in Madan, Asenovgrad, Klisura are its main beneficiaries and the teachers assess the thematic-problematic approach as particularly effective. I have observations in the Vocational High School of Mining in Madan, where our former students from the Smolyan Branch of the P. Hilendarski University teach. They show high motivation for professional realization even during their studies and now, as active teachers of BEL, they create that educational environment in which meaningful teaching stands out with adherence to the problem-thematic approach as a “working tool for value orientation and basic humanitarian literacy” (p. 207).

Secondary schools have been found to be the “most – squeezed part of the system, because the discrepancy between the high state criteria and the real learning opportunities is an objective fact. The commentary on the correlation between the curriculum and the DZI format brings out systemic deficiencies such as: reproduction of ready-made clichés; conformism; lack of personal attitude; superficial surfing and unconvincingness in attempts to highlight meaning and significance, etc. These results have their own explanation in the study. The author points out the fact that the modern teacher, a good executor of normative documents and algorithms, does not have professional creative freedom to systematically guide the entire literary educational process such as cultivating a love of reading and the ability to independently construct meaning.

The derived guidelines for future adjustments to educational policy focus on: selecting such a volume of educational content that it is distributed temporally as a basis for forming sufficient objective competencies of the student subject; changing the contemporary status of the teacher's "projection of the system" and transforming him into "that reliable bearer of the spirit" who possesses moderate enthusiasm to uphold the credo "Salvation begins with us."

The conclusion of the dissertation includes conclusions and generalizations with a summarized focus. The individual aspects of the development are traced as cause and effect, leading to the design, course and effectiveness of the research. The subordination between goals, logic and effectiveness of the research procedure is respected.

The outlined contemporary picture of the specificity through which the literary-educational concept exists in the second stage of high school, brings out specific methodological strategies. Namely: thematic-problematic approach, comparative, intertextuality; different in format didactic technologies for dealing with program deficiencies and exam formats for DZI. Conclusions are summarized in the form of expectations for “adequate qualification methodological support at the academic and institutional level”. The conclusion also contains a summary regarding the “constructive dialogic relationships” between the subjects of the modern educational paradigm – teacher and student.

The contributing moments encompass the following characteristics (p. 215):

- **the study** presents a comprehensive attempt to reflect on LOD in the context of an existing curriculum in the second stage of high school;
- **the reference** to a textual corpus is intended to analyze current deficits and trends – a step towards change through corrective actions;
- **The analyzed** data from a survey of English language teachers in three types of schools and in different geographical areas presents an objective educational picture of a contemporary type, highlighting attitudes, positions, deficits, and trends;
- **presents** own pedagogical experience with professional mastery of methodological strategies and tools.

The applications in the study are about the specifics of the research searches. These are entry-level results; test tasks; essay options; discussion formats; survey surveys. The students' essay-like reflections not only constitute the current educational status of this specific "new" generation, but also show to some extent the literary culture with which their teacher - Tsv. Draganova invests in them in order to form the new civil society here, in Bulgaria. It is not in vain that students today define their teacher as "the best" (from my own research).

Style and expression. Correctness of scientific terminology

The paper uses an adequate scientific style. The terminology is appropriate and well defined.

Compliance with the requirements for the dissertation

The standard for formatting the dissertation text has been met, including: formatting, citation, bibliography, transliteration.

Comments or recommendations to the author

The main strengths of the development include: significance and relevance of the research issue; research interpretive skills and analytical approaches; strong evidentiary arguments in the form of tested empirical learning situations; high scientific erudition and literary culture; methodological maturity and mastery, adequate to the research.

I recommend: that the dissertation be published as a monograph, useful both for beginning teachers and for established colleagues in the field of English.

No plagiarism was detected, there is no incorrect citation.

Abstract

The abstract presents a standard type of text: administrative aspects of the procedure; content of the dissertation; contributions; list of publications on the topic; bibliography.

The presented general characteristics of the dissertation work summarize the compositional and content structure. It complies with the abstract requirements. The text is relevant to scientific research such as design, research procedure, and results. The style and language of the text are synchronized according to scientific etiquette.

Publications

The articles published in publications of the University of Preslav Bishop Constantine discuss the content structure of the dissertation work. They thematically reflect the scientific research at different stages of the research.

The first publication, dedicated to **comparative interpretation as a teaching format for literature classes**, contains a motivated interest in this issue with a theoretical and applied focus (In: Yearbook of the University of Sofia, pp. 381 – 387).

The second publication, dedicated to **the new curriculum and rewriting of the literary canon**, contains an in-depth analysis and correlation between programmed educational content and the literary canon. Their conceptual connection brings out valuable authorial ideas included in the dissertation work, enriched by the teaching experience of “recontextualizing canonical texts” (In: Yearbook of the University of Sofia, Word and Society 3, pp. 206 – 215).

The third publication is dedicated to the **historical concept and context in high school literature curricula**, based on the scientific research of the dissertation work. The concept of “historicity” is practically oriented towards the formation of a literary - civic culture: the ability to analyze and evaluate; models

of behavior and social interaction despite the identified deficits in the contemporary educational reality. (In: Yearbook of the University of Sofia, pp. 53 - 66).

The fourth publication unfolds **the genre conventions of the essay as an educational tool** for updating the contemporary applicability of LOD in the context of building sociocultural and literary competencies. The text focuses on **the essay as a student argumentative text**, but goes beyond the educational character in the process of building essay skills. The research direction, appliedly oriented towards "small steps", outlines the status of the essay as a "focus of interpretative possibilities" for the formation of an argumentative culture, built upon in the process of humanitarian education (In: Yearbook of the University of Sofia – Word and Society 4, pp. 190 – 208).

Conclusion:

The relevance of the study is undoubted. The acute need for such research is a fact in the contemporary educational reality. The contribution of the work is proven by the overall presentation. The scientific and applied aspects are highlighted, based on the basic principles of pragmatism (problem-thematic approach; comparative approach; intertextuality; interpretative approaches, etc.). There is an aesthetic focus of the literary and educational discourse through presented practical ideas for improving methodological strategies, in the expediency of which the leading role of the Bulgarian teacher is.

The conclusions drawn on the qualities of the presented dissertation work of Tsvetelinka Draganova – **Literature Education in the Second Gymnasium Stage of Secondary School** – categorically confirm the right of its successful defense for the acquisition of the ONS "Doctor" in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching in... (methodology of teaching in Bulgarian EIC and literature).

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