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ШУМЕНСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
"ЕПИСКОП КОНСТАНТИН ПРЕСЛАВСКИ"

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EVALUATION

of a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in the Doctoral Program: Methodology of Teaching Fine Arts Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in... Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences

THEME "THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE ABILITIES (GRADES 5–6)"

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Reviewer: Assoc. Prof. Svetozar Yordanov Chilingirov, PhD Professional Field 8.2. Fine Arts Faculty of Education, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen

1. Brief Biographical Data on the PhD Student

Petyo Damyanov Stefanov completed his higher education in 2003 at Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, obtaining a Bachelor's degree in the Major: Pedagogy of Teaching Fine Arts. In 2004, he acquired a Master's degree in the program "Pedagogy of Teaching Plastic Arts", again at Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen.

By Order No. RD–10–105/06.12.2020, he was enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the doctoral program: Methodology of Teaching Fine Arts, Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in..., Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences – at the Department of Pedagogy of Fine Arts and Technology Education (*VITM*), Faculty of Education, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen.

By Order No. RD-10-184/07.03.2023, the term of the doctoral studies was extended by one year, and by Order No. RD-10-114/19.02.2024, he was discharged with the right of defense (completed the doctoral program with the right to defend the thesis), effective from 01.02.2024.

From September 2019 to June 2023, he held the position of Part-time Assistant, and since the autumn (September of the same year), he has been appointed as an Assistant at Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen.

1. General Description of the Dissertation and the Attached Materials

The dissertation is structured into three chapters and comprises 230 standard pages of main text, accompanied by a 61-page appendix. It is illustrated with 46 tables, 21 diagrams, and 22 figures. The bibliography comprises 103 information sources in Bulgarian and foreign languages.

2. Relevance and Significance of the Dissertation

The relevance of the dissertation stems from the growing role of digital technologies in contemporary education, both on a national and global scale. In the context of the digital transformation of the educational environment, schools face the necessity of adapting traditional teaching methods to new technological realities and to the changing cognitive and creative needs of students. This is particularly valid for Fine Arts education, which, by its very nature, presupposes a higher degree of visuality, experimentation, and creative freedom.

The dissertation develops and presents a system – a model of lessons based on the purposeful integration of digital technologies in Fine Arts education for Grades 5 and 6. Their utilization expands the capabilities of traditional methodology, enriching it with new forms of visualization, interactive approaches, opportunities for creative experimentation, and the stimulation of students' independent and research work. The digital environment creates conditions for the more active participation of learners in the educational process and for the development of their artistic-creative abilities in accordance with their individual pace and interests.

The significance of the research is also evident in the response it provides to a number of contemporary challenges in Fine Arts education – the necessity of enhancing student motivation, overcoming formalism in the educational process, and effectively combining artistic-creative activities with the digital culture of adolescents. In this context, the dissertation proposes a scientifically grounded and practically applicable model that contributes both to the development of pedagogical theory and to the enhancement of educational practice.

3. Research Methodology

The PhD student Petyo Stefanov presents a clearly structured and scientifically grounded methodology for the empirical research. He has selected research methods that enable the tracking of dynamics in the development of the artistic knowledge, skills, and creative abilities of the students participating in the study.

The methodological toolkit includes methods for diagnosing artistic knowledge and skills for the perception and interpretation of works of fine art, as well as methods for assessing the degree of development of the students' artistic-creative abilities – visual imagery, associative and combinatorial thinking, and imagination. To validate the obtained results, the PhD student also employs

mathematical-statistical methods, which enhances the objectivity, reliability, and evidentiary value of the conclusions drawn.

The pedagogical research conducted in this manner fully meets the criteria for a dissertation and clearly reflects the contributions of the PhD student.

4. Characteristics and Evaluation of the Dissertation

The main text of the dissertation is presented in three chapters in a balanced proportion.

In **the first chapter** of the dissertation, the PhD student establishes a solid theoretical framework for the research by tracing the emergence and development of digital arts, along with their classification, technologies, means, and forms. A psycho-pedagogical characterization of the so-called "digital generation" is presented, substantiating the necessity of applying contemporary technological approaches in education.

Particular attention is paid to the application of digital technologies in Fine Arts education, analyzing the current curricula, the opportunities for integrative links, and the methods for incorporating digital tools in the delivery of learning content. The chapter examines the essence and mechanisms of forming students' artistic-creative abilities, as well as the factors, approaches, and methods for stimulating their creativity. A logical place is also assigned to the formation of digital competencies within the Fine Arts educational process as a key element for the development of students' artistic-creative abilities.

Chapter Two of the dissertation presents the methodology of the experimental research, clearly and logically formulating its aim, tasks, object, subject, and research hypothesis. These elements are well-structured and correspond directly to the research problem and the objectives of the dissertation.

The diagnostic methodology is presented in detail, serving to examine the level of students' artistic training, artistic knowledge, and artistic-creative abilities at the beginning and at the end of the experimental research. The methodological toolkit is appropriately selected, creating conditions for the objective tracking and analysis of the results.

Chapter Three of the dissertation presents the conduct of the experimental research and the comparative analysis of the results obtained. The author systematically outlines the experimental program, clearly distinguishing between the ascertaining, formative, and control stages.

Of particular significance is the formative stage, during which the PhD student tests the system-model of lessons developed by him, based on the integration of digital technologies in Fine Arts education. **This model constitutes an original contribution to the dissertation, as the experimental results presented demonstrate its effectiveness for the development of students' artistic-creative abilities.**

The chapter also presents comparative analyses of the results from the participants' artistic activity, the level of their artistic knowledge, as well as the development of their visual imagery, associative and combinatorial thinking, and imagination. The analysis is substantiated and supported by quantitative and qualitative data, which confirm the research hypothesis and demonstrate the positive effect of the applied experimental system.

Structured and presented in this manner, the dissertation represents an in-depth study of the significance and role of digital technologies in the development of students' artistic-creative abilities.

5. Scientific Contributions of the Dissertation

In the dissertation, the PhD student Petyo Stefanov correctly identifies and outlines the following scientific contributions:

1. In the theoretical research, a systematization and classification of digital arts is carried out, analyzing their nature, technologies, means, and forms, as well as the possibilities for their application in Fine Arts education.

2. The role of digital technologies in Fine Arts education and their impact on the development of artistic-creative abilities are substantiated.

3. A diagnostic toolkit for the research and assessment of students' artistic-creative abilities has been developed and tested, and indicators for the evaluation of students' digital artworks have been defined.

4. An author's system – a model of Fine Arts lessons for Grades 5 and 6 – has been created and tested, utilizing diverse digital resources and tools: smartphone applications for image creation and processing, the distortion filter in Adobe Photoshop for creative transformations, PowerPoint for the preparation of presentations, and Paint for the creation of illustrations and projects.

5. Experimental research has been conducted, demonstrating that the use of digital technologies stimulates students' imagination, the development of their artistic knowledge, the level of their visual imagery, as well as their associative and combinatorial thinking.

6. Publications

The publications related to the dissertation are three in number and meet the required count according to the minimum national requirements.

7. Recommendations

I have the following recommendation for Petyo Damyanov Stefanov:

An impressive volume of research and practical-applied work has been achieved in the dissertation, which justifies the necessity for its results to be published and made accessible to a broader professional audience. The publication of a monograph would be of significant practical value and, most importantly, would support the professional activity of Fine Arts teachers.

8. Questions

I also address the following question to the PhD student:

Is it possible for the tested system-model of lessons to be applied to students of other age groups, and if so, what methodological modifications or didactic approaches would be necessary for its successful adaptation?

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider that the submitted dissertation complies with the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor". I express my positive opinion and propose to the members of the Scientific Jury that the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" be awarded to Petyo Damyanov Stefanov in Professional Field 1.3. Pedagogy of Education in..., Higher Education Area 1. Pedagogical Sciences.

21.01.2026 Reviewer:

/ Assoc. Prof. Svetozar Chilingirov, PhD/