

STATEMENT OF OPINION

By

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Regarding a dissertation for the award of the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) in the field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching in... (Methodology of Teaching Fine Arts)

Author: Petyo Damyanov Stefanov

Topic: "The Role of Digital Technologies for the Development of the Visual and Creative Abilities of Students (Grades V-VI)"

Academic Advisor: Prof. Dr. Dimitar Iliev Balkanski

The reviewed work consists of 231 pages, of which 220 constitute the main text structured into an introduction and three chapters (introductory part, problem statement, research part, analysis and evaluation of research results), followed by findings and a conclusion, and an English summary. The bibliography comprises 90 sources in Cyrillic, 13 sources in Latin script, and 13 sources from the Internet. The 61-page appendix (bound in a separate volume) includes 20 surveys and questionnaires, lesson plans (from diagnostic, formative, and summative sessions) implemented in the educational process for Grades V and VI, along with accompanying results – student drawings from the lessons.

It should be noted that the title corresponds to the content of the dissertation. The choice of topic is original and provides fertile ground for research, as it examines the specific characteristics of contemporary digital technologies and their place within art pedagogy. In recent years, we have witnessed a number of studies enabling more effective training for student art educators through the use of modern digital technologies to create artworks within a virtual reality framework in the educational process. In this regard, Petyo Stefanov has investigated the role of digital technologies and their significance for the development of students' creative visual arts abilities in fine arts education (Grades V–VI); consequently, he has conducted a serious scientific and artistic study with significant contributions.

In the introduction of the dissertation, the doctoral candidate has justified the necessity of this specific research. The scientific problem, the relevance of the study, the object, the subject, the hypothesis, as well as the goals and objectives, are formulated here. Significant issues

concerning the teaching of fine arts are raised, including the integration of information technologies in the formation of knowledge and skills for visual expression. This, in turn, contributes to the creation of original visual and creative results among the students participating in the experiment.

The first chapter examines the theoretical parameters related to the emergence and development of digital arts, as well as the application of new information technologies in the fine arts education of the "digital generation." The possibilities for integrating digital technologies into the implementation of the fine arts curriculum for Grades V and VI are explored, along with their significance for the development of students' creativity and visual-creative abilities through the formation of digital competencies and the use of appropriate methods.

Chapter Two, titled "Methodology of the Experimental Research," examines the methodological parameters of the dissertation – the methods used for diagnostic observation, surveys, tests, questionnaires, and the subsequent statistical analysis through the application of quantitative and qualitative indicators and the corresponding mathematical-statistical methods. The organization of the methodical experiment, the composition of the experimental and control groups, and the specific stages of the research process are described. This chapter clarifies the nature and structure of the experimental program, which integrates digital technologies with traditional visual arts activities in school and accounts for their influence on the development of imagination, creative thinking, and the visual-creative abilities of fifth and sixth-grade students.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the conducted experimental research and the comparative analysis of the results.

The research was conducted in three stages:

- **Initial Diagnostic Stage:** involved determining the baseline level of students' artistic knowledge and creative abilities.
- **Formative Stage:** consisted of conducting a series of lessons with the experimental group, aimed at testing a model system of classes that integrate digital technologies for image creation.
- **Control Stage:** focused on analyzing the achieved development regarding students' figurative representations, as well as their associative, combinative, and variative thinking.

This chapter performs a comparative analysis between the experimental and control groups, examining changes in artistic knowledge, visual representations, and the development of imagination and figurative thinking. It should be noted that the effectiveness of the developed educational model has been verified through an analysis of the qualitative characteristics and quantitative data collected during the experiment, as a result of which the hypothesis has been proven. The achieved results are presented graphically through tables and diagrams.

The concluding part of the dissertation presents summarized results, which are a consequence of the validation of the model system and provide grounds for recommending that teachers implement this system in the pedagogical process, which will require skills for working with specialized software for graphic image processing. At the end of the dissertation, the main conclusions and recommendations are presented, outlining how to develop students' creative abilities through the use of digital technologies in art education.

I consider the contributions of the dissertation to be authentic, highlighting the most significant among them, namely:

- The potential for digital arts to be integrated into fine arts education to facilitate the development of students' visual-creative abilities.
- The design and validation of the author's original model system of fine arts lessons for Grades V–VI, utilizing a diverse range of digital resources and tools.
- The conducted experimental research, which proves that the use of digital technologies stimulates students' imagination, the development of their artistic knowledge, the level of their figurative representations, as well as their associative and combinative thinking.

Alongside the indisputable qualities of the dissertation, I have some specific remarks and recommendations: the text of the dissertation contains extensive illustrative material (artworks, student works, questionnaires, tables, and diagrams), some of which should have been placed in the appendix.

The doctoral candidate meets the criteria set by the National Minimum Requirements and has collected the required points across the groups of indicators for the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD). The publications attached to the dissertation are three in number and correspond to its content. The candidate has participated in seminars and research projects. In addition to his role as a researcher, Petyo Stefanov also distinguishes himself as an artist, actively participating in numerous art exhibitions and open-air workshops (plain-air) both in the country and abroad.

The presented dissertation possesses significant scholarly qualities and academic contributions. I recommend to the members of the esteemed Scientific Jury that Petyo Damyanov Stefanov be awarded the educational and scientific degree of "Doctor" (PhD) in professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching in... with the scientific specialty of Methodology of Teaching Fine Arts.

3.02.2026
Blagoevgrad

Prof. Dr. Emil Kukov

Handwritten signature of Prof. Dr. Emil Kukov in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'E' and 'K'.