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ШУМЕНСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
“ЕПИСКОП КОНСТАНТИН ПРЕСЛАВСКИ”
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STATEMENT

By Prof. Dr. Sc. Neli Stoycheva Dimitrova, member of the academic jury for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” in the scientific specialty Methodology of Teaching Fine Arts, professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching..., area of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences

Regarding: the dissertation titled “The Role of Digital Technologies for the Development of Students’ Artistic and Creative Abilities (Grades V–VI)” by Petyo Damyanov Stefanov, full-time PhD student in the Department of Pedagogy of Teaching Fine Arts and Technological Education at the Faculty of Education, Konstantin Preslavsky University of Shumen, supervised by Prof. Dimitar Iliev Balkanski, PhD.

I. Summary of the Dissertation and the Candidate’s Work

The dissertation submitted by Petyo Damyanov Stefanov consists of 224 pages of main text in one volume and 61 pages of appendices in a separate volume. The bibliography includes 103 sources: 77 in Cyrillic, 14 in Latin script, and 12 internet sources. The main text is structured according to the requirements for this type of academic work. It consists of three chapters, a conclusion, findings, and references.

The topic is highly relevant, as digital technologies are part of everyday life and increasingly form the basis for developing key competences according to the

European Qualifications Framework and the EU “Europe 2020” strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth. This makes the topic suitable for a dissertation.

A strong impression is made by the in-depth analysis of the formation of students’ artistic and creative abilities, demonstrating that the doctoral candidate is thoroughly familiar with the teaching of fine arts in the Bulgarian educational system.

II. Evaluation of the Scientific and Practical Contributions

The introduction defines the conceptual framework, the relevance of the topic, the object, subject, and research methods. A scientific thesis is formulated, along with the main research goal and tasks. The methodology and organization of the study are presented.

In chapter one characterized the theoretical foundations of the research are outlined. The emphasis is on the application of digital technologies in fine arts education, including an analysis of the current curricula. A major contribution of the doctoral candidate is the presentation of opportunities for integrative links and ways of incorporating digital tools into the teaching content.

The methodology of the experimental study is presented in chapter two. A diagnostic methodology is described, clearly outlining all components: aim, tasks, working hypothesis, subject, and object. The organization of the experiment, the composition of the experimental and control groups, the stages of the research process, and the diagnostic tools are described.

Chapter Three - the empirical study is presented in three stages: diagnostic, formative, and control. The doctoral candidate presents a developed and tested model of lessons based on the integration of digital technologies in fine arts education. This model is one of the main contributions of the dissertation, and its effectiveness for developing students’ artistic and creative abilities is demonstrated through the experimental results. A comparative analysis of the results is also provided.

The conclusion and findings are precisely and clearly formulated.

The contributions listed, together with the comprehensive empirical research, show that Petyo Damyanov Stefanov is a capable researcher whose work enriches

and expands the educational process in vocational training and improves pedagogical practice.

Three publications related to the dissertation topic are attached. They are sufficient and accurately reflect the results of the doctoral candidate's work.

The abstract is structured according to the requirements and corresponds to the dissertation text, presenting it in a systematic way.

III. Critical Notes and Recommendations

In future work, the doctoral candidate should present the terminology used with greater precision. For example, in section 1.6, the formation of digital competences is discussed. It is unclear whether the EU Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) is used or whether specific artistic-digital skills are defined. This distinction is important for the measurability of the results in Chapter Three.


IV. Questions

1. What are the main challenges in implementing integrative links between “Fine Arts” and “Information Technology” in grades V–VI?
2. Is there a risk that the technological mastery of software may dominate over the purely creative process and aesthetic education?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I consider that the submitted dissertation meets the requirements for awarding the educational and scientific degree “Doctor.” I express my positive assessment and propose that Petyo Damyanov Stefanov be awarded the degree “Doctor” in professional field 1.3. Pedagogy of Teaching..., area of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences.

Date: 06.02.2026

Member of the jury:


(Prof. Dr. Sc. Neli Dimitrova)