



УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „ПРОФ. Д-Р АСЕН ЗЛАТАРОВ“

Катедра „Педагогика и методика на обучението“



STATEMENT

for Dissertation on the Topic

DEVELOPING EMPATHY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE THROUGH DESIGN THINKING

PhD Candidate: *Avi Abner*

Form of Study: *Independent*

for the awarding of the educational and scientific degree of **Doctor (PhD)**

Field of Higher Education: 1. Pedagogical Sciences

Professional Area: 1.2. Pedagogy

Specialty: *Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy*

Author of the Statement: *Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimira Atanasova Dimitrova, "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" University - Burgas*

(Order No. UD-176 dated 15.05.2024 of the Rector of "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" University)

1. Characterization of the Dissertation

The structure of the dissertation research meets the requirements for this type of scientific work. The dissertation is structured with an introduction, three chapters, appendices, and references.

The PhD candidate has conducted an in-depth analysis of the main concepts underlying the dissertation topic through a theoretical review of 422 sources of proven scientific value, including 12 titles in Cyrillic and 410 titles in English. Of the sources presented, 100 are accessible online.

The analysis of the literary sources is logically constructed, employing a systematic approach and making well-argued conclusions.

Through this analysis, the PhD candidate demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical foundations and issues related to empathy and design thinking. Empathy is examined as a psychological construct and an important personal quality relevant to social interactions. Emphasis is placed on its educational dimensions and its significance for the development of social and emotional competencies in primary school children. Various approaches to the study of empathy are clarified, highlighting three main types of empathy that are of interest for the experimental work.



Design thinking is presented as an interdisciplinary approach for problem-solving and innovation. Its educational projections are clarified. The possibility of introducing design thinking in the 3rd and 4th grades of primary education to develop students' empathy is substantiated.

The conclusions accurately reflect the state of the problem and help formulate the aims and objectives of the research.

The methodology of the dissertation is built upon a didactic experiment, conducted in three main stages: stating, forming, and controlling. The experimental program is implemented through empirical studies to determine the level of development and characteristics of empathy in primary school age, developing and implementing a design thinking model in the primary stage. Four instruments were used – two in the stating stage and two in the control stage of the experiment. Two instruments were adapted and further developed by the PhD candidate and their scientific advisor, and two are entirely original. The methodologies used were validated through appropriate statistical procedures, providing reliable results.

The forming part of the experiment includes the design of the model for implementing design thinking and the trial of four specific projects developed using the model. The model clearly demonstrates the methodology for developing empathy through design thinking.

The experimental empirical part is illustrated with 51 figures and 49 tables, supporting the analyses made and leading to the formulated conclusions.

2. Characterization of the Abstract

The abstract corresponds to the dissertation and contains all the required elements.

3. Scientific Contributions

The main contributions of the dissertation can be categorized as scientific-theoretical, scientific-applied, and applied. The following contributions of the dissertation stand out:

- A proprietary methodology for measuring empathy in primary school students has been developed and adapted. This methodology has been



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validated. The various proposed instruments can be used as standardized tools in pedagogical practice.

- A model for introducing design thinking in the 3rd and 4th grades of primary education to develop students' empathy has been developed. Materials and resources have been created based on the model. The model has been tested and documented. It can be applied in various forms in educational practice.

4. Publications and Participation in Scientific Forums

The list of publications related to the dissertation includes 6 titles, of which 3 are authored solely by the candidate, and 3 are co-authored with the scientific advisor. Five of these publications are in non-refereed journals with scientific review, and 1 is submitted for publication in a non-refereed journal with scientific review. The PhD candidate has participated in two scientific projects funded by NIHDT at "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov" University.

5. Critical Notes, Recommendations, Questions

Regarding the graphical design, some omissions have been noted that could be addressed in a timely manner. According to the numbering introduced, figures 3.1 and 6.4 are missing. Figure 6.4 should be 6.3, and all references in the text should refer to it accordingly.

6. Conclusion

The submitted dissertation on the topic "**DEVELOPING EMPATHY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE THROUGH DESIGN THINKING**" by **Avi Abner** meets the requirements of the law for ASCRB and its application regulations.

I recommend that the esteemed members of the Scientific Jury award the educational and scientific degree of "**Doctor (PhD)**" to **Avi Abner** in the Field of Higher Education **1. Pedagogical Sciences, Professional Area 1.2. Pedagogy, Specialty Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy.**

Date: 23.06.2024
City: Burgas

Member of the Scientific Jury:

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Krasimira *Dimitrova*)

Подпис заличен
Чл.2 от ЗЗЛД