

STATEMENT

**by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhivko Zhekov, MU "Prof. Dr. Paraskev Stoyanov"-
Varna
on dissertation**

"THE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF GENERAL SUPPORT FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION"

for the award of PhD in
field of higher education 1. Pedagogical Sciences,
professional field 1.2. Pedagogy - scientific specialty "Special Pedagogy"

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1. General characteristics of labour

The dissertation presented for defense is a pedagogical-psychological study revealing the nature of prosocial behavior of high school students. It is an expression of the PhD student's scientific interest in exploring the nature and specificity of prosocial behavior of high school students.

The presented work aims to explore possible ways for the formation of altruistic attitudes in high school students on the basis of organized training as part of the overall support for the personal development of students in schools in our country.

In terms of structure and content, the dissertation meets all the requirements for this kind of scientific work. It has a total length of 218 pages, including 196 pages of text structured into an introduction, four chapters, conclusions, a conclusion, references and 22 pages of appendices. The text of the dissertation includes 17 figures (diagrams), the appendices - 2 tables, 3 questionnaire forms for altruistic attitudes in adolescence and 25 photos. The literature used includes 156 items, including 58 sources in cyrillic and 98 in latin.

2. Relevance of the dissertation

The present work considers the prosocial behavior of adolescents (grades 8-12) as a process of self-awareness continuing throughout the high school stage, within the framework of general support for students' personal development, thanks to which self-image and self-concept are formed. The development of prosocial behaviour in adolescence implies the accumulation of knowledge and the development of social skills related to diversity in life, which in turn support personal choices in the present and the future. It is the structural building block of lifelong learning. The foundations are laid for strategic planning, wise choices and decision making for helping actions. The process is a preparation for the challenges in the life path, which implies constantly changing and upgrading personal skills within the changes in the social environment.

3. Content aspects and contributions of the thesis

Careful perusal of the work leaves the impression of a competently conceived and intelligently implemented piece of scholarship.

The theoretical framework of the thesis includes introduction, four chapters, conclusion, references and appendices.

The introduction presents the methods and methodology of the dissertation research. The object, subject, aim and sub-objectives, tasks, and hypothesis of the dissertation research are stated. Some of the stated sub-objectives overlap with the research objectives.

Chapter One defines the basic concepts of empathy, altruism and prosocial behaviour, presenting the views and definitions of different authors. The formation of altruistic attitudes in personality development is also presented. The two paradigms of human prosocial behavior are clarified, and the reasons for its emergence and development are given.

Different models relating to human behaviour are discussed. Attitudes, motives and needs are justified as the main determinants of prosocial behaviour. The relationship between socialization and prosocial behavior is explored by analyzing the possibilities of training towards developing prosocial behavior at the individual and group levels. Their relationship to empathy is substantiated. After the theoretical analysis, the doctoral student comes to the conclusion that the organized education towards developing prosocial behavior of high school students should be considered as a process. As a special form of teaching and learning experience aimed at the acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits, at the development of abilities in which the assessment of prosocial behavior and the development of strategies to encourage it are integrated.

Chapter Two presents an overview of classical and contemporary inclusive education. A comparative analysis of the development of the concept of inclusive education in different countries is made, and contemporary trends for inclusive education are presented. Presented are normative documents regulating the public relations within the provision of general and additional support for the personal development of children and students, as part of the structural defining units of inclusive education in educational institutions and support centers in the Republic of Bulgaria. Some practical problems in the provision of general and additional support for personal development in educational institutions in Bulgaria are pointed out, as the doctoral student summarizes that today in Bulgaria the resources - educational and human factor - are limited, which destabilizes the process of inclusive education on the territory of many settlements in the Republic of Bulgaria. The idea of organized learning towards encouraging and motivating prosocial behavior that should set a unique psycho-emotional and cognitive profile in the student (empathy, insight, catharsis) is presented, and with this, group belonging should be developed.

The problem of identity is central to the period of adolescence (grades 8-12). Organized training towards the development of prosocial behavior of high school students as part of the overall support for the personal development of students should

support the process of formation of the structural parameters of the self-concept of the field of adolescent psyche (14-19 years), as well as identification with the group (class / classroom, student self-government, informal student subcultural groups). For this purpose, a diagnostic study was conducted to evaluate and improve in the construction of an empirical-theoretical pedagogical-psychological model for developing prosocial behavior of high school students.

In Chapter Three - "An empirical study to construct a model for developing prosocial behaviour in high school students", a direct group survey was conducted for the purpose of the research in three phases (September 2018, January 2019 and April 2019) with students in grades 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 at 2. Secondary School "Academician Emilian Stanev", gr. Sofia. The diagnostic testing procedure was performed by the classroom teachers in the class period, after a preliminary briefing. The empirical sample included 384 respondents in stage one, 362 respondents in stage two (two students with special educational needs) and 368 respondents in stage three. Conducted by the author, the "Questionnaire on Altruistic Attitudes in Adolescence" consists of seven questions formulated to obtain an objective and reliable assessment based on the most common answers and students' prevailing opinion on their participation in prosocial initiatives: within the class; within informal/subcultural school groups; at student council/parliament level. Four of the questions are open-ended and give students the opportunity to describe pro-social initiatives in which they have participated.

The research instrument used was the survey method - a direct group survey in three stages.

The diagnostic study demonstrates a new vision for stimulating the prosocial behavior of adolescents, points out the main directions and problems in the process of pedagogical work, analyzes the main trends and the necessary change, focusing on the social relevance of the topic.

Based on the results obtained and the conclusions drawn, recommendations are defined for improving the technology of the application of training to develop prosocial behavior of students.

ANOVA and Excel software were used to process the results of the diagnostic section. The evaluation was done on the basis of three indicators. It would be good if other statistical methods were used to process the results of the study, which would give more clarity about the relationships.

The diagnostic study does not claim to be representative. Considering the subjective nature of the assessments, it gives an indicative picture of the attitudes of high school students towards prosocial behaviours. The results are presented through various charts and graphs and analysed by the PhD student, which gives a good impression of his data interpretation skills.

In the general context, the attitudes of high school students towards prosocial behaviours are positive, based on which the doctoral student draws conclusions in educational and life aspects.

For the purposes of the diagnostic dissertation research, four focus groups were also implemented and used as an additional diagnostic method to test the hypothesis of the dissertation research as well as to develop the questions in the questionnaires. This format of participant interaction ensured the spontaneous expression of unforced and reasoned responses based on facts.

The questions for focus groups 2, 3 and 4 are identical. There is only a difference with the questions of the first focus group.

The PhD student provides a detailed qualitative analysis of the results of the four focus groups. Based on the opinions expressed, questions were formulated in the design of the survey in three stages in order to track the dynamics of prosocial behaviors among students.

In Chapter Four, the doctoral student presents us with: general characteristics; a conceptual framework for developing prosocial student behaviour; a content framework (knowledge, skills, competencies) in: the area of personal development, the learning process, criteria for assessing prosocial student behaviour, and levels of experiential knowledge, intellectual, communicative, cooperative and personal reflection. The relation - self-assessment - evaluation is also described as a pedagogical device in the context of personal reflection. A procedural framework of the empirical-theoretical model including different methods is also presented.

Various forms of pedagogical interaction are also described, such as: debate, student conference and consultation. The techniques of pedagogical interaction are also presented: instruction, encouragement and the question as a technique. Suggested are: proactive activities of pedagogical interaction, and topics for the class hour within the framework of training towards developing prosocial behaviour.

The doctoral student also presents limitations for the application of the empirical-theoretical educational-psychological model.

In the conclusion, based on the obtained data, the author confirms the working hypothesis that it is possible to empirically determine the relative potential for prosocial activity of the student, respectively of the class/class, the informal student group and the student self-government.

The proposed model corresponds to the contemporary dimensions of inclusive education. The empirical data obtained do not support the claim that each student in the high school stage of school education has such specific characteristics that it requires an individual approach to the formation of altruistic attitudes. This largely reflects general methodological regularities as well as the group nature of the process of developing prosocial behavior.

Through the generalizations made, the author comes to the main conclusion that by improving the mechanisms of general support for personal development in the process of student inclusion, students' activities are intensified.

I partially accept the theoretical and practical contributions mentioned in the thesis.

The presented publications (6 in total, 2 in print, 4 solo and 2 co-authored) are in the context of the PhD thesis.

The abstract (48 pages) meets the requirements for a summarized presentation of the work.

CONCLUSIONS:

The dissertation shows that the PhD student Stanislav Padin has a thorough knowledge of the dissertation topic.

I believe that the candidate meets the conditions and procedure for the award of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" under the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria, the Regulations for the Application of the Law on the Development of Academic Staff, the Regulations for the Development of Academic Staff of the Trakia University.

Following the arguments put forward, as well as on the basis of the overall positive evaluation of the dissertation research carried out, I propose the scientific jury to vote positively and to award the degree of Doctor of Education and Science to Stanislav Padin in Professional Field 1. 2. Pedagogy - Special Pedagogy, for which I give my affirmative vote.

city Varna
06.01.2023 г.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zhivko Zhekov: