

Review of the dissertation on "Reflexive (Re)meaning making of interactions with qualifying pedagogical specialists (multimodal meaning-centered model)"

for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science in Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy

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Reviewer: Prof. D.Sc. Yanka Merdzhanova, Faculty of Education, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

General characterization of the work and the candidate: We are confronted with a topic with a challenging title and vibe, because it promises a meaning-centered model; second, for its multimodal reality; third, intended for a social construct (qualification of pedagogical specialists), which is essentially positive - it should form categorically, identifiably, visibly, measurably any kind of normatively ordered behavior and competencies. Whereas Meaning and Multimodality are multiplicities with a high degree of freedom and indeterminacy - also in their Essence, i.e. are negative (invisibility). Fourthly, it sets further dynamics and variations in a global social context. Thus, we have a hologramic theme that will obviously develop as a search for the intersections of the positive with the negative in order for the full sustainable development of the educational professional to occur, generating a vibrant and fulfilling environment for learners. A very serious request from a candidate who has professional and research experience relevant to the problem field - Assoc. Dermendjieva has worked at the VTU Branch of the Faculty of Education and at VTU as a lecturer and as a deputy director of the branch; she has experience as a children's teacher, lecturer and expert-trainer at RAABE Bulgaria, specialist at the Center for Intercultural and Educational Interactions at the South – West University of Blagoevgrad, where she is currently an associate professor. She has numerous qualifications that foster academic and expert collaborations.

My main observations and judgements are related to the discovery of specific points indicating the author's suggestions of positive-negative intersections: my meta-question: is the tautology and the triple emphasis in the title of the work "reflexive" - "rethinking" - "meaning-centered" allowed/accepted with such a clear consciousness, and how are they tracked and assured as realizations - both in the research procedure and in the practice for which they are intended? My specific questions are:

1. Does the meaning-centred model enable a shared and unique creation of personal professional meaning by trainees?
2. Does the author demonstrate exploratory re-thinking at a meta-reflexive level in the process of the research?
3. Is the multi-modal reality constructed with equal representation of different types of learning environments to maintain their overall sustainable balance and hence balanced professional growth?
4. Has the level of defining valid and workable indicators to measure the parameters of the model - environment, interactions, professional development - been reached?
5. Are qualitative transformations in qualification interactions actually revealed by the meaning-centred model?

6. Can the research-diagnostic and formative tools used be used confidently and reliably in the practice of teacher education by trainers and trainees?

Substantive evaluation of the work: it is 418 pages of text consisting of 4 main chapters. The first one focuses on the qualification of pedagogical professionals - between basic training and lifelong learning. The triad is meaningfully and re-meaningfully sustained at a high level. Chapter two unfolds the meaning-centred management of teacher qualification by introducing the space of multiple literacies. The third chapter conceptualises the Educator in this context; Instructional multimodal technology as a balance between physical and technological learning environments; The overall meaning-centred model of managing such qualification. Chapter four proposes the procedure of the empirical study and the analyses of the results. I propose a change in the chapter titles with the addition to each of them of an initial term "Re-imagining..." - as is actually happening - Re-imagining Lifelong Learning...; Re-imagining Educational Reform...; Bimodal Re-imagined Model of...; Re-formative Empirical-Experimental Study of... Thus the titles will correspond to the actual second, third level critical meta-reflection undertaken by the author: already in the aim and hypothesis one can see the realization that the proposed model is actually intended for the teachers themselves - for them to elaborate their unique professional model-continuum for prospective professional self-development.

Chapters one and two re-construct visions of lifelong learning and the organic fit of multiliteracy into the trajectory of continuing teacher education - professional development in the context of a full life sense of self and meaning making. First and second expert input questions receive positive validation. Question three is fully developed in chapter three in presenting both the teaching approach and the author's meaning-centred model itself. Questions four, five and six are defended convincingly in chapter four of the thesis. Several years of empirical research, carried out in several stages, each supplying the next with the necessary validity and justification, a wide range of study groups both by educational organization - 12 educational institutions, and by territory - in 4 different districts, and by educational levels from kindergarten to vocational high schools, and in terms of numbers in individual groups - 175 teachers and principals in total; 120 in the experimental part, precisely organized in 1 EG and 4 EG. A complete critical analysis is made of the present situation of teachers' self-perception and actual achievements through and in teacher training. Reliable criteria of meaning-centredness - motivation, sense of personal efficacy, dialogicality, self-criticism, creativity - are derived and traced. The instruments used enable the collection of objective, reliable, valid, rich data, subjected by the author to critical, spiritualized, meaning-centered interpretation, and thereby convincingly answer the 6th expert input question. The global and specific conclusions of Assoc. Dermendzhieva's findings reflect and derive from her actual research work, but additional interest will be articulated in the notes and questions section.

Contributions: I accept the meaning and logic of the contributions mentioned by the candidate. Re-considering them from the paradigm of the expert approach and arising from the claims and spirit of the work, I define them as I have introduced them as my hypothetical searches:

1. The author demonstrates research re-thinking at a meta-reflexive level in the process of research - at both the theoretical, research and appraisal-application levels.
2. The author's conceptual meaning-centered model enables a shared and unique creation of personal professional meaning by the students.
3. The multi-modal reality is constructed with equal representation of different types of learning environments to maintain their overall sustainable balance and hence balanced professional growth.

4. The level of defining valid and workable indicators to measure the parameters of the model - environment, interactions, professional development - has been reached.
5. Actual qualitative transformations in qualification interactions are highlighted through the empirical verification of the meaning-centered model.
6. The research-diagnostic and formative tools used can be used confidently and reliably in the practice of pedagogical qualification by trainers and trainees - i.e. the research findings can be confidently multiplied in educational practice.

Abstracts and publications: fully meet the requirements of the thesis.

Recommendations, critical comments and questions:

1. Note: The scope of "education professionals" is stated, but the study covers only teachers and principals. Accuracy requires clarification of validity of data and measurements.
2. Note: the table of contents makes it clear that a meaning-centered management model is being developed and so named and deployed, but "management" is absent from the study title. I consider this to be incorrect and misleading about the reader's expectations.
3. The following are recommended, therefore, when publishing the monograph:
 - including the term 'transformation' in the title instead of 'reflexive', i.e. I suggest First, the title 'Transformation of qualification interactions with teaching professionals through a meaning-centred managerial model' - more coherent and clear to the audience; directly addressed to them, brought to the forefront; re-overcoming the tautology justified for research purposes as emphasis but not for pragmatic-functional purposes.
 - reflecting on a more correct definition of pedagogical professionals - "teachers and principals"; if the author wants to include other types of pedagogical professionals, the relevant argumentation (based on the data) should be added to both the paper and the monograph. Thirdly
 - including the term "rethinking" to the titles of the individual chapters, which actually preserves it as a process and at the same time concentrates the title of the work.
4. In the conceptual syncretic meaning-centred model of managing interaction in teacher education on p. 260 of the thesis - which of the circles does the candidate suggest is and will prove most difficult for teachers?
5. And, in relation to the shared re-flexive considerations, a Two-faceted question to the author: first, what difficulties, resistances and problems does she foresee in applying her model in practice - of three different TYPES - managerial, professional-personal, subjective-personal, and second - what steps does she foresee as preventive and absolutely necessary for these difficulties?

Conclusion: the examination of Sofia Dermendzhieva's work establishes the legality of the procedure implemented by the TU Stara Zagora; the conformity of the procedure and the work to the ZRASRB; significant and high scientific contributions at the theoretical and applied

level; a reserve potential of authorial know-how that the author can develop in the future, and most importantly - my personal expert conviction is that based on the work under consideration, the candidate deserves the degree of Doctor of Science under Professional Field 1.2. Pedagogy and that this will be applied by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sofia Hristova Dermendzhieva in a highly ethical and effective manner for the sustainable development of the system of professional pedagogical qualification, of the people in it, which means - of the children and young people in school. I therefore propose to the esteemed and dear (to me) members of the scientific jury that they award the requested scientific degree to the candidate.

Sofia

04.09.2023

Reviewer:

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