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Review of Habilitation Thesis

Title of the thesis:

Current Challenges of English Language Teaching in Gifted Education

Applicant:

Mgr. Eva Reid, PhD.

Habilitation field:

Subject-specific Didactics

Department:

Univerzita Konstantina Filozofa v Nitre - Pedagogicka Fakulta

Reviewer/opponent:

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Heiner Böttger, Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt,
Germany

This reviewer's report was drawn up based on the letter of appointment issued by Dr. Gabor Pintes, PhD., Dean of the Faculty of Education at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra on June 11, 2018.

The habilitation thesis has 212 pages of English language text and 39 pages of resumé/summary in Slovakian language, in all very sufficient 251 pages.

1. Significance/topicality of the habilitation thesis

The habilitation thesis "Current Challenges of English Language Teaching in Gifted Education" is submitted in the form of a monograph.

The habilitation thesis is strong evidence that the candidate has clearly developed a fully independent and innovative research profile. The candidate, Eva Reid PhD., is without any doubt qualified to be appointed to a professorship or an associated professorship in the field of Subject-specific Didactics, especially focusing foreign languages didactics.

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LITERATURE



Her habilitation thesis corresponds to the “second book” requirements not only in the English-speaking, but also in the entire European academic world and seemingly beyond; it demonstrates an independent research effort and is relevant to a research area that is clearly distinct from that of the PhD thesis of the candidate. In terms of requirement standards, it is understood that this habilitation process is also equivalent to the status of an appointment as an associate professor, as soon as completed in Nitra.

The issue of “gifted people education” in general and also very specifically with respect to English language teaching has long been missing in the discussed and other related fields. The candidate herself has developed a much deeper research insight into the topic and is amongst the leading experts in the field (see also bibliography pages 198 - 211).

The presented thesis adds scientifically valuable contributions to the discussion as well as to the controversy on how to individualize young gifted persons` foreign language acquisition process in institutionalized learning and teaching contexts. The theme of the candidate`s habilitation thesis therefore remarkably corresponds to the field of habilitation and can distinctly be considered as highly topical and outstandingly useful.

2. Assessment

The reviewer can only comment on the scholarly quality of the presented habilitation thesis against the background of the previously published research by the candidate. In particular, the methodological-theoretical originality of the monograph or the papers as well as the relevance and contribution of the work to the chosen research area, namely “Current Challenges of English Language Teaching in Gifted Education” will be examined. The candidate`s previous research work will also be taken into account, if relevant.

The habilitation thesis is divided into 8 chapters in a very thoughtfully chosen sequence. The first chapter fully describes the current state of the art concerning foreign language acquisition in a very reasonable and clear length. This report summarizes the main circumstances of this complex process and draws first conclusions for the English language classroom as a basement for the following research chapters. Recent findings of educational neurosciences are not included.

The second section briefly but very precisely defines relevant terms and situates the “gifted” topic exactly within selected strategical and institutional education contexts in the English speaking world, Europe and the home country of the candidate, Slovakia. Furthermore, first more hypothetic principles are deduced based on the previously mentioned findings, which is necessary to build a proper research ground to go from in chapters 5 to 8.

A third chapter points out focal didactical and methodological aspects of teaching gifted students. Creativity, divergent thinking, higher thinking skills and personal factors are very well and also more than adequately (with respect explicitly to habilitation standards) chosen and focused from various possible other possible aspects touching the topic mainly at the surface. Chapter 4 then clearly emphasizes the need for research in a problem-based statement. This chapter impressively shows the ability of the candidate to independently plan, structure, organize and execute research.

At the heart of the thesis are the chapters 5 to 7. On a very high academic level, matching the habilitation requirements at any time, they demonstrate and validate the candidate`s efforts to introduce and prove new deep insights into the scientific discussion concerning the habilitation field. The chapters correspond to best empirical standards and provide new data sets for devolping individualization, inclusion and differentiation in English language teaching further. With a special view on gifted language learners, the habilitation thesis is suitable to take the scientific discussion to a higher level.

Chapter 8 subsequently and logically provides comprehensible didactical conclusions, consequences and future fields of foreign language educational of action. Those subchapters will be subject to more follow-on research beyond this habilitation thesis and are of high value.

The thesis is documented by tables and charts on a very good level, and allow an adequate overview and insight.

All parts of the habilitation thesis are the original work of the applicant.

3. Remarks and questions

During the evaluation process, the reviewer found very few monita, which absolutely normally belong to a critical inspection and assessment, and may here serve to foster future proceedings. They are not meant to be a correction *per se*, but as a sensitization for further research questions.

- a) Chapter 1 should take latest neurobiological findings into consideration. In the very near future, state of the art of language acquisition research will not want to miss this aspect with respect to evidence-based methods.
- b) The suggested techniques in chapter 8 will have to be subject to scientific *in situ* investigations. In this form they are rather hypothetical.
The respective chapter underlies some structural or hierarchical weaknesses. The term "teaching techniques" must be deeply clarified to avoid misunderstandings.
Examples: PBT is neither a technique nor an activity. Contrasted to subchapters 8.4/5/7/8 f.e., subchapter 8.6 Mind maps should be subordinated to techniques of visualization.
- c) The Conclusion (pages 196/197) shouldn't contain another summary of the thesis's content (page 197), but should point out and summarize especially the "good news" of the research conducted by the candidate.
- d) The reviewer suggests a fictitious question: What does the candidate expect as further development and solutions for the research area?

4. Conclusion

The habilitation thesis can only be assessed as «sufficient» or «insufficient». A qualified or conditional acceptance is not possible. In this respect, the presented work is fully "sufficient". Based on the habilitation thesis presented and hereby evaluated, the reviewer strongly and firmly recommends that the habilitation process is completed with the habilitation defence. The habilitation thesis fully and undoubtedly meets the requirements applicable to habilitation theses in the field of Subject-specific Didactics.



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